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An Opal

Ednah Proctor Clarke

An Opal

AN OPAL

Verses

By

Ednah Proctor Clarke



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To
My Father and Mother

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FEB 1957

THE poems entitled "A Dancer," "To a Wild Rose Found in October," and "The Humming-Bird," were first published in the *Atlantic Monthly*; "An Opal," "The Mocking-Bird," and "Maid Marian's Song," in the *Century*; and "Tom Weaver's Wooing" in *Harper's Bazaar*.

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E. P. C.

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An Opal

A ROSE of fire shut in a veil of snow ;
An April gleam athwart a misted sky :
A jewel—a soul ! Gaze deep if thou wouldst know
The flame-wrought spell of its pale witchery.
And now each tremulous beauty lies revealed ;
And now the drifted snow doth beauty shield.

So my shy love, aneath her kerchief white,
Holdeth the glamour of the East in fee ;
Warm Puritan !—who fears her own delight,
Who trembleth over that she yieldeth me.
And now her lips her heart's rich flame have told ;
And now they pale that they have been so bold.

The Dancer

SKIN creamy as the furred magnolia bud
That stabs the dusky shadows of her hair;
Great startled eyes, and sudden-pulsing blood
Staining her cheek and throat and shoulder bare.

*(Ah Manuelita !
Lita Pepita !
List the cachuca !
Dance ! dance !)*

The Dancer

Swaying she stands, the while one rounded arm
Draws her mantilla's folds in shy disguise,
Till in the music's subtle, quick'ning charm
Her trancèd soul forgets the alien eyes.

Fades the swift flush, save from the rose-soft mouth,
And all the conquering memories of Spain
Fling wide her veil; the vintage of the South
Leaps in her heart, and laughs through ev'ry vein!

*(Ah Manuelita !
Star of Cordova !
Passion and innocence !
Dance ! dance !)*

The Dancer

Gone from her gaze the stage, the mimicry :
Yon painted scene? It is Cordova's walls !
'The eager trumpets ring to revelry —
The banderillero cries — the toro falls !

'The vision thrills to heart, to eyes, to lips ;
Her castanets click out in conscious pride ;
Curved throat, arched foot, and lissome-swaying hips,
The music sweeps her in its swirling tide.

Love and denial, mockery and desire,
A fountain tossing in its moody play,
Tempest of sunshine, cloud, and dew, and fire,
Dancing in joyance to the jocund day !

The Dancer

*(Ah Manuelita !
Till the moon swoons in mist !
Till the stars dim and die !
Dance ! dance !)*

Soft ! through the music steals a yearning strain —
Now distant viols grieve down the drowsy night —
Her fluttering feet are poised ; then drift again,
Luring in languor, dreamy with delight.

*(Ah Manuelita !
Witch of the winged feet !
Lead on to dream or death !
Dance ! dance !)*

The Dancer

Hushed in her heart are raptures and alarms;
Falling, as water falleth, to her knees,
She spreads the drifted foam-wreath of her arms;
The music dies in whispered ecstasies.

Sunset on the Bras d'Or

HUSH of wind and hush of wave
And hush of the dancing foam,—
With yellow sail 'neath a violet sky,
Oh, little boat, drift home !

Drift and float on a faery sea
Where faery islands swim,
With darkling hills at the water's brink
Like warders giant-grim.

Sunset on the Bras d'Or

Oh helmsman, say! what port to-day?
From out their serried lines,
Banners and ramparts and golden mosques,
What Orient city shines?

And ivory fair, through shifting haze.
What Caprian palace gleams,
Its marbles stained with a thousand years
Of memories and dreams?

'Tis but the gypsum quarry white,
'Tis but the bold bluff set
With ruby of maple and gold of birch,
And the pine's black minaret.

Sunset on the Bras d'Or

Not this Italia's freighted sea
Nor Tangier's crowded shore,
But Northland wave and Northland peak
And the wilding, shy Bras d'Or !

Here, with the charm man seeketh far
To set his bound heart free,
The Mighty Mother weaves her spells —
Her ancient glamourie.

Here, where the great blue heron bides,
And the saucy sand-peep brown,
Where dark lagoons steal back to the hills,
And brooks come laughing down ;

Sunset on the Bras d'Or

Here, with the touch of tossing spray,
 'The song of the winds' release,
She gives to the souls that list and wait
 The secret words of Peace.

Oh helmsman ! loose thy guiding hand,
 We make no port to-day !
Be ours the chart of the dreaming heart,
 Over the irised bay.

Ours, to drink of the lotus-balm
 That stills the fevered pulse,
Where the purple jellies lift and drift
 Above the drifting dulse.

Sunset on the Bras d'Or

Ours, wrist-deep in the lapping tide,
To watch yon sleeping gull,
With the white foam crest beneath his breast
To lift — and lull !

Violet, amber, and burning rose
Flame in the west, and die,
And one white star, like a soul newborn,
Looks out from the shadowed sky ;

And under the shadows tender-deep,
Our spirits lie at rest,
Like children tired with play — or tears,
Hushed to their Mother's breast.

“Where the Bee Sucks”

HO! burly reveller,
Drunk with the cups of many-nectared June!
Storming a-zig-zag through the slumbering noon
With wassail stir!

Rude roisterer! cease
Troubling the clover 'neath these gnarléd boughs!
Sunned cheek to cheek, I with the blossoms drowse,
Lapped round with peace.

“Where the Bee Sucks”

Thy ilk should stay

Where the gay garden flaunts the orchard wall,
Where Bouncing Bets and Black-eyed Susans tall
Hold hoyden sway ;

Where Poppies bow

'Mid gossiping Pansies and prim Lavender,
And hooded Pease spread toothsome provender
For such as thou !

But Honey-clover, —

She lets the wingéd rout go murmuring by :
She has the clouds, the bird's song, — she and I,
We want no lover !

"Where the Bee Sucks"

Sooth, I have seen,
When plumed Sir Papillon drifts down to woo
In fluttered cloak, pale amber laced with blue,
Or when between

Green guarding blades
Some dragon cuirassier in glittering mail
Sues for her gage, how all their ardours fail, —
Coyest of maids !

Thy cousin there,
The sober white-face, who by prudence thrives,
She flouts and pouts for all his combéd hives, —
Wilt thou then dare ?

“Where the Bee Sucks”

Saints of the fields !

To thee, thou most unmitigated scamp,
Swashbuckler !—who cares naught for court or camp,—

To thee she yields !

By sun and shine !—

Aye, toss thy head as never head was tossed !—

Dost know what other orchards he has crossed ?

His heart is thine

One moment brief—

Nay, Insolent ! My lips are not for thee !

Thou blundering, blustering, braggart bumble-bee, —

Thou honey-thief !

“Where the Bee Sucks”

Would'st claim all spoil?
Wast not enough to mar this charmed hour,
When careless I drowsed by the careless flower,
With thy rude coil?

Nay, — grumbling rover,
Put up thy biting blade, — I'll fight thee not!
I've garnered sweets of which thou canst not wot;
I yield the clover!

A Good-bye

THE wakening bugles cut the night :
“To horse ! To horse ! Away !”
And thine the lips that bid me go,
The eyes that bid me stay.

God make me blind for this one hour !
God make me only hear
That hurrying drum,—that cry “They come !”
And thy “Good-bye !” so near.

A Good-bye

Oh eyes that hold me with your tears !

Think not your prayers I spurn :

Eyes that must for a soldier dim,

Not from a craven turn.

Oh lips that bid me forth to fight,

I take your challenge — so !

Where red death waits without the gates,

Thy knight, and God's,—I go !

The Humming-Bird

DANCER of air,
Flashing thy flight across the noon-tide hour
To pierce and pass, ere it is full aware,
Each wondering flower !

Jewelled coryphée,
With quivering wings like shielding gauze outspread —
And measure like a gleaming shuttle's play
With unseen thread !

The Humming-Bird

The phlox, milk white,
Sways to thy whirling: stirs each warm rose breast ;
But not for these thy palpitant delight,
Thy rhythmic quest.

Swift weaves thy maze
Where flaunts the trumpet-vine its scarlet pride,
Where softer fire behind its chalice blaze
Doth fluttering hide.

The grave thrush sings
His love call, and the wood-dove's shy romance
Throbs through the twilight ; thou hast but thy wings,
Thy sun-thrilled dance.

The Humming-Bird

Yet doth Love's glow
Burn in the ruby of thy restless throat,
Guiding thy voiceless ecstasy to know
The richest note

Of brooding thrush !
— Now for thy joy the emptied air doth long —
Thine is the nested silence, and the hush
That needs no song.

Sappho

WHERE the Leucadian air its fragrance drowned
In the salt sweep and tingle of the sea,
Where the harsh cliff his bosom yearningly
Spread grassy-soft, she lay whom Lesbos crowned.

Careless of laurel her warm hair unbound
Crept down her side, slow-lingering, to her knee ;
The light wind lifted it, — then tenderly
Fingered her idle harp with pleading sound.

Sappho

She heard it not ; nor heard the free delight
Of rhythmic waves ; earth's music to her ears
Was mute. She only saw on that lone height
A boy's dark eyes, — and the long, empty years.
Her lips sobbed : “ Phaon ! ” — through her fingers white,
The leaning, thirsty grasses drank her tears.

Maid Marian's Song

SO-HO ! so-ho ! for the hunting
In the crisp October morn,
With the lace of the frost like a kerchief tost
On the black of the twisted thorn !

Dark was the wood ere dawning,
When the moon her bow unstrung,
(When russet and green the tall trees lean,
And never a bird gives tongue)

Maid Marian's Song

Till the sun sprang up in scarlet
And hurled his shafts afar,
And the last star fled where the night lies dead
And the meadows of morning are.

Up! up! my lads o' Lincoln!
Up! up! my merry men all!
The pheasant whirs in the clustered furze,
And hark how the plovers call!

See trampled brake and osier:
Who slept in the bosky hollow?
A stag-of-ten! Up! up! my men!
Oh, follow — follow — follow!

Maid Marian's Song

On to the chase, naught fearing—
We maids o' the kirtle green,
We wait you here, with cup and cheer,
And the kiss that laughs between!

A fig for the white-cheeked gallant
That never the stout bow drew,
With his mincing ways and his honeyed phrase,
Ambling the greenwood through;

Not so, not so, my gentles,
Ye go a-hunting here!
Who rides to the hilt, be his own blood spilt,
Brings home the fallow deer!

Maid Marian's Song

Oh, give me the lad in the jerkin,
With the red blood 'neath the tan,
Who can harry a glade or hold a maid
With the heart and arm of a man!

Then ho for the lads o' Lincoln!
And ho for the hunting morn!
For love that doth woo with the twanging yew
And the lilt of the lusty horn!

Noon

THE high sun spills his golden wine
Across the fields : the crowding clover-buds
Lift eager lips, and drain the draught divine,
Till drowsy fire through veiny tissue floods ;
Languid they lean above the sleepy grass,
While with deep whirring bass and treble fine,
Tuning their tiny pipes, the small musicians pass.

Circe

SEE how they surge and snarl about my feet,
Gaunt wolves, fanged leopards, and black, gluttoned
swine,

And swell their whimpering curses in mine ears
When twilight trembles o'er the tideless sea.

Look ! this one was a king's son, — his hot eyes
Smoulder beneath their pent-house bristles still ;

A Cyprian sailor this, who, brawny-armed,
Cleft the quick foam to swifter reach my side ;

This wolved it in Bœotia, — still in thought

He leads his harrying legions up the steep !

And this —

Circe

Ah down ! thou gloating, thirsting hound !
Would'st thrust thy fawning head against my throat ?
Nay — what to me thy impotent despair !
These are my glades ! This is my sovereignty !
Here like a sheathéd bud fed hour by hour
By the slow-ripening sun, the subtle dew,
Till on a sudden — lo ! the passioned bloom,
Here my full heart its maiden calyx burst :
Heard the insistent yearning of the sea,
Heard 'neath the rounding moon the bird of dusk
Flood forth his heart, till through each listening vein
I knew that life was love, and love was life ! —
What part have I with pity or remorse ?

Yet how he cringing licks my sandal's thong : —
There — there — I did not mean to harm thee, — so !
So ! — dog of Tempe. Why ! — thine was the first
Of all the eager sails that whipt the gale,
Hasting from every port their purple pomp

Circe

To me,—the scarlet-lipped, the tawny-eyed !
And I, I dreamed of kingdom in thine arms,—
I,—goddess, woman,—


See him nearer press
And lift his long, lean muzzle 'neath my hand
With moaning cry,—ah ! dost thou too recall
That day? Shut in a veil of slumberous haze
Earth lay, like Danæ in her golden hour,
God-thrilled with promise, swooned in mystery,—
And o'er the hurrying tumult of the waves
Thy slanting sail swept on to Ææa's strand.

I see the horror burn within his eyes
Again !—again ! I see the goblet fall,
I feel his writhing fingers grip my wrist
And loosen into claws—

World-judging Zeus !
What part have I with pity or remorse?

Circe

Down — dog ! — that thinkest all the torment thine ! —
Could I, the daughter of the deathless Sun,
I, with immortal ichor in my veins,
Give or receive the weakling love of earth?
I brewed the philter for thy lips to drain
That the god-germ hid in the mortal clay
Might rend its straitened cell and stand revealed !
To mate thy soul with mine I gave the cup, —
To thee ? — to each !

 Oh Zeus ! behold them here, —
Brutes, hideous, hungering, — with eyes of men !
Ye grovelling beasts, — I would have made you gods !
My purpose pierced the clay, plucked bare the soul, —
If to the measure of your souls ye shrank
What fault was mine ? Yet still ye storm mine ears
Pleading for mercy — mercy — mercy — Ye !

At the Breath of a Flower

VIOLETS that hold the South
Caught in your bloom,
Here where the Northern stars
Silver the gloom ;

Yielding your royal hearts
(Purple of Tyre),
Drooping your tender eyes,
Shy in desire ;

At the Breath of a Flower

Methinks a spirit, once
 Bending to earth,
Kissed close a mortal's lips,
 Brought you to birth.

So doth your fragrance drift
 Warm on the air,
Sweet as the heart's first thrill,
 Pure as its prayer ;

Pure as through Dawn's flush falls
 A red-bird's note,
Sweet as a baby's hand,
 Warm on my throat.

At the Breath of a Flower

Softly . . . your touch hath drawn

Love from afar !

Spirit to spirit turns

As star to star. . . .

Ah, no ! . . . the wind moans by,

The shadows dream :

Lonely the night, and far

The cold stars gleam.

Deep as remembered grief

Lieth the snow ;

Spirit to spirit turn? . . .

Do you not know,

At the Breath of a Flower

Violets, Love's touch must thrill
Body and soul?
Star-dust and dust-of-earth . . .
That is Love's whole.

Softly . . . your hearts are wet,
Here in my hand. . . .
Hush! . . . fold the secret close . . .
You understand.

The Mocking-Bird

LIST to that bird! His song — what poet pens it?
Brigand of birds, he's stolen every note!
Prince though of thieves — hark! how the rascal
spends it!
Pours the whole forest from one tiny throat!

Tom Weaver's Wooing

YES sir! the Ole North State fer me
Toh liv' an' die in!
Though corn an' cotton does git skarce
An' times is tryin'.

I've lived straight on — though as a boy
I watched folks leavin'
By hundreds, fer Injany boun',
An' hopes deccivin' —

Tom Weaver's Wooing

In this ole house sot on the pike —
The pike from Rahly,—
Why, here, one April mawnin' 'twus,
I fust saw Polly !

Her folks wuz makin' toh the West
With fifty others —
Wagons an' cattle, dogs an' men,
Young uns an' mothers.

It come they stopped nigh toh my place
Toh eat their snack thar :
So I showed Polly roun' the lot,
An' branch down back thar.

Tom Weaver's Wooing

Her eyes wuz like the vi'lets thar
The wet spray glistened,
An' when she spoke, the mock-bird stopped
His song an' listened.

The minutes flew, — we didn't keer
What they wuz provin';
I filled her little han's with flowers —
The train wuz movin'.

“Good-by !” she whispered : “oh, good-by !
I'm glad I met ye ;
I'll keep the vi'lets, — take one back, —
An' don't fergit me !”

Tom Weaver's Wooing

Then she wuz gone. The carts creaked past,
The cattle strainin' :
It seemed all dark about the place,
Like it wuz rainin'.

The hours dragged on,—I tried toh crush
What seemed dum folly,
But somethin' in me called an' called :
“Polly ! Polly !”

The stars come out, like Polly's eyes,
So soft an' tender :
Thar wuz a preacher in the train —
What wuz toh hender?

Tom Weaver's Wooing

I thought o' the long miles she'd resk
Besot with danger :
Injuns an' cutthroats, — Lord knows what ! —
Yit — me — a stranger ?

Afore I knowed, I wuz at the barn, —
What ef I lost her !
I dragged the brown mar' out an' flung
The saddle 'crost her.

We loved each other, her an' me,
Like she wuz human ;
She 'peared toh scent my trouble now,
An' like a woman

Tom Weaver's Wooing

She sot her head toh help me through;—

Then we-uns started!

We went so fast, it seemed as though

The shadders parted

Toh let us through, then shut agin

As 'hin' an arrer;

I knowed a nigh-cut 'crost the fields,

A fordway narrer

Over the river, 'bove the bridge,—

But when we reached it,—

Lord! 'peared like all the Devil's guns

Had stormed an' breached it!

Tom Weaver's Wooing

An April flood, the shaller stream
Swept' down a torrent, —
Tost trees, black whirlpools, churnin' foam,
An' thunderin' current !

I pulled up, — but the ole brown mar'
She never holted :
She tuck the bit betwixt her teeth
An' in she bolted !

Lord ! Stranger, you'd a-thought all Hell
Tugged at the tether !
Sucked down, — blind, — strugglin', — lost, — the
bank !
Safe ! — an tohgether !

Tom Weaver's Wooing

An' thar afore us, down the road,
With pine-knots shinin',
A long white serpent through the gloom,
The train wuz twinin'.

I rode the mar' straight toh her cart —
A somethin' tol' me —
Lord! with my blood ajump like that
Yer couldn't hol' me!

I twitched the curtain back — an' thar
She lay a-sleepin';
The starlight trimlin' down her cheek
Showed she'd ben weepin'.

Tom Weaver's Wooing

Mussed curls, brown lashes glued with tears,
Red mouth aquiver,
An', crushed thar clost beneath her throat,
The flowers I giv' her.

I pulled back — though I'd rode so fast,
So far, toh fetch her —
I'd meant toh kiss her — but I swar'
I couldn't tech her.

The ole mar' must er guessed my thoughts —
She'd no fool doubt, sir !
She struck her brown nose in the cart
An' whinnied out, sir !

Tom Weaver's Wooing

Lord ! ef you'd seed them blue eyes then !

The look that met me !

"Polly," I sez, "come back, come back ;

I cain't forgit ye !"

Frum dream o' me, toh sight o' me,

'Fore thought an' doubt 'woke,

I shuck her all er suddent so, —

An' jis' her heart spoke.

Well, well, — thar hain't much more toh tell.

Her folks wuz willin' ;

Ef they'd said "No" — my blood wuz up —

Thar'd ben some killin' !

Tom Weaver's Wooing

Up toh the stars the preacher's pra'r
The night wind carried :
"Through joy and grief ; through life till de'th,"
An' we wuz married.

I caught her then, an' kissed toh smiles
The blue eyes' trouble :
The ole brown mar' went home that night
Carryin' double.

Nigh untoh fifty year ago :
Yes — she's — gone fust, sir.
Thar's war she's laid — thar war ye see
The vi'lets cluster.

Tom Weaver's Wooing

'Twas pow'ful resk we tuck, yer say?
Well — chance wuz even ;
Missed it — I'd missed my heaven here,
P'haps t'other heaven.

Love strikes but wunst in that-a-way —
Call it dum folly ;
But when it comes — git on yer horse
An' ride fer Polly !

April Weather

BELOVÉD, it was April weather
When Love went down the wilding way :
The little birds on bloomy spray
Were cocking head and preening feather ;

The glad brook slipped the grim frost's tether,
The red-bud flushed with thoughts of May ;
Belovéd, it was April weather
When Love went down the wilding way.

April Weather

And thou and I, — we knew not whether
To laugh or weep, be sad or gay :
When Love went down the wilding way
With tears and joy so close together —
Belovéd, it was April weather.

When Joscelyn goes a-milking

WHEN Joscelyn goes a-milking,
Then I must fain go too,—
When the sun blinks over the pasture high
To catch her coming through!

When the blackbird flies the orchard
To glint from a nearer spray,
And “Joscelyn! Joscelyn! Joscelyn!”
Is all the rogue can say!

When Joscelyn goes a-milking

Then "Cusha ! Cusha ! Cusha !"

She coaxes the clumsy cows ;
Odzooks !— if she spoke my name that soft,
Do you think I'd stand and browse ?

But there's never a vexing heifer
That runs in the pasture free,
That's half so quick, with her flout and flight,
As Joscelyn is — to me !

Do what I will to please her,
It's naught but pout and rail :
Faith ! she stamps her foot and she storms at me,
When Brindle kicks the pail !

When Joscelyn goes a-milking

And yet, when she goes a-milking,
 I trudge behind in the dew,—
And (the teasing jade !) I'll not be sure
 But Joscelyn likes it, too !

The Deathless

WHAT charlatans in this later day
Beat at the gates of Art !
Each with his trick of speech or brush, —
Forgetting, that apart

From all the brawling of an age,
Its feverish fantasy,
She waits, who only unto Time
The soul of Art sets free !

The Deathless

God's handmaid Beauty, — whose touch rounds
A dewdrop or a world, —
God-sprung when first through Chaos' night
The morning wings unfurled ;

Beauty, — who still the secret gives
Whispered the ages through, —
Recurrent as the flush of dawn,
Essential as the dew.

Oh, babblers of some surer guide ! —
Knowledge goes changing by ;
Caprice may bloom its little hour,
And creeds are born and die ;

The Deathless

Still Melos on her worshippers
Looks with calm-lidded eyes ;
Still Helen, though Troy sleeps in dust,
Smiles through the centuries ;

Still she who gleaned on Judah's plain
Love in her sheaves doth bind ;
Still, down the glades of Arden, dance
The feet of Rosalind.

To a Wild Rose found in October

THOU foolish blossom, all untimely blown !
 Poor jest of summer, come when woods are chill !
Thy sister buds, in June's warm redness grown,
 That lit with laughter all the upland hill,

Have traceless passed : save on each thornéd stem
 Red drops tell how their hearts, in dying, bled.
Theirs was the noon's rich languor, and for them
 The maiden moon her haloed beauty spread ;

To a Wild Rose found in October

For them the bobolink his music spilled

In bubbling streams ; and well the wild bee knew
Their honeyed hearts. Now bird and bee are stilled ;
Now southward swallows hurry down the blue,

Fleeing the murderous Frost that even now

Hath smote the marshes with his bitter breath,
Quenching the flames that danced on vine and bough, —
Think'st thou thy beauty will make truce with Death,

Or hold in summer's leash his loosened wrath?

See ! o'er the shrunk grass trail the blackened vines ;
And hark ! the wind, tracking the snow's fell path,
Snarls like a fretted hound among the pines.

To a Wild Rose found in October

The pallid sunshine fails,—a sudden gloom
Sweeps up the vale, a-thrill with boding fear.
What place for thee? Too late thy pride and bloom!
Born out of time,—poor fool,—what dost thou here?

.

What do I here when speeds the threatening blight?
June stirred my heart, and so June is for me.
Who feels life's impulse burgeon into light
Recks not of seasons, knows not bird nor bee.

I can but bloom,—did the June roses more?
I can but droop,—did they not also die?
The Moment is: the After or Before
Hides all from sight,—canst thou tell more than I?

To a Wild Rose found in October

What matter if to-night come swirling snow

And Death? The Power that makes, that mars,
is One.

I know nor care not: when that Power bids blow,

I ope my curléd petals to the sun.

A Salem Witch

(Elizabeth Procter, wife of John Procter of Salem, was accused of witchcraft by the Salem children, and condemned to death a few months before the birth of her child. Her husband defended her innocence, and, in so doing, brought accusation and condemnation upon himself. He was hung on Gallows Hill, August 19, 1692.)

THE wind blows east,—the wind blows west,—
It blows upon the gallows tree :
Oh, little babe beneath my breast,
He died for thee !—he died for me !

A Salem Witch

The judges came,—the children came,
 (Some mother's heart o'er each had yearned);
They set their black lies on my name:—
 “A God-accurséd witch who learned

“Each night (they said) the Devil's art,
 Through Salem wood by devils drawn.”—
I, whose heart beat against his heart
 From dark till dawn!—from dark till dawn!

He faced them in his fearless scorn
 (The sun was on him as he stood):
“No purer is her babe unborn;
 I prove her sinless with my blood.”

A Salem Witch

They spared the babe beneath my breast,—
They bound his hands, — they set me free, —
Hush, hush, my babe ! hush, hush and rest ;
He died for thee ! — he died for me !

They dragged him, bound, to Gallows Hill, —
(I saw the flowers among the grass) ;
The women came, — I hear them still, —
They held their babes to see him pass.

God curse them ! — Nay, — Oh God forgive !
He said it while their lips reviled ;
He kissed my lips, — he whispered : “ Live !
The father loves thee in the child.”

A Salem Witch

Then earth and sky grew black, — I fell —

I lay as stone beside their stone.

They did their work. They earned their Hell.

I woke on Gallows Hill — alone.

Oh Christ who suffered, Christ who blessed, —

Shield him upon the gallows tree !

Oh babe, his babe, beneath my breast,

He died for thee ! — he died for me !

Fair Rosamund's Song

(Fair Rosamund sings in her secret bower

Cheerily !

But a raven croaks on the moated tower

Eerily.

And over the lilies, over the grass,

Shadow and sunlight fleck and pass ;

God save us ! gentles all.)

Fair Rosamund's Song

My heart was a flower,—
(Heavy, heavy, heavy with honey-dew !)
Past my garden came the king :
Black o' velvet and golden dower
And voice like the wild bee's murmuring,
(And oh ! the honey-dew !)

My heart was a flower,—
(Heavy, heavy, heavy with honey-dew !)
God o' the lilies made me fair :
Under the north wind's knife they cower,
Lilies asway in the garden there,
Spilling His honey-dew.

Fair Rosamund's Song

My heart was a flower,—
(Heavy, heavy, heavy with honey-dew !)
Was it, oh heart ! so dark a sin
To draw a soul from greed and power
With Love's white peace to shut it in?
(And oh ! the honey-dew !)

My heart was a flower,—
(Heavy, heavy, heavy with honey-dew !)
If thou shouldst die with sin unshriven,
Flower o' my heart ! in death's dread hour
Tell Him who gave, thou too hast given,
Given His honey-dew.

Fair Rosamund's Song

*(Fair Rosamund ceased, in her secret bower
Sighing;*

*And the raven croaked, from the moated tower
Flying!*

*For shadow creepeth across the grass,
Shadow of blood that will not pass;
God save us! gentles all.)*

After the Battle

(Naseby. June 14, 1645. An upper chamber in the house of Elder Ezekias Wrathband. Twilight.)

SO still he lies, — across the floor
The red stains gleam, — one — two — three —
four —
Five — from the couch side to the door.

Sweeps on the wind the throng's fierce cry :
“ Praise God ! praise God for victory ! ” —
Within these walls the echoes die.

After the Battle

What were the words my mother spake?
"I served his mother, — for her sake
Guard thou his sleep no King shall wake

"Save Him who doth man's guilt decide."
A Papist traitor? Nay! — they lied!
I could have killed them here, and died

Beside him! — I? — the Elder's child?
Had they but known his lips had wiled —
His, Rupert, Papist lord of Guyld, —

My heart from faith and home and race,
They would have banned the starveling grace
That lends his body burial space.

After the Battle

His body? Why — but yesterday
To the King's camp, to join the fray,
I watched him go, — I bade him stay —

I knew the bloodhounds on his track —
I would have hid him, held him back ;
He laughed, and hung on riband black

About my throat his signet ring.
I wept, and clung like a feckless thing, —
He loosed my hands : “ Sweet Love ! — the King ! ”

And now — Oh God ! I see the street —
The stern-lipped men with trampling feet
That bore him ; — brought thee to me, Sweet,

After the Battle

Nor knew I knew thee,—I, apart,
Who swooned not, wept not,—could tears start?
Dead!—with my curl stabbed through his heart.

.

So still he lies,—yet once an hour
He slumbered so by Gylde-wood tower,
Head on my knee like some drooped flower.

Rupert!—I do not fear to creep
Close to thy side,—thou dost but sleep;
So—cheek to cheek—I'll vigil keep.

After the Battle

And kneeling here, with thee once more,
I'll tell thee, o'er — and o'er — and o'er —
All thou hast heard so oft before.

How the birds sang! It was the May
Thou dost recall, that first glad day
Our lives began. Dost mind the way

I, startled at thy coming, fled?
The May-boughs caught my coif, and shed
My curls' loosed gold about my head.

How thou didst rein thy plunging steed,
Leap from the saddle, give no heed, —
Then on my track with panting speed!

After the Battle

What could I do? The May-boughs cast
Their treacherous arms and held me fast,
And both my hands in thine were claspt.

“My faith! a Roundhead coif to hold
Such largess, such unminted gold!
Nay, Sweet — forgive! I am too bold.”

Thine eyes were like a brook's sunned brown;
Thy laugh, a brook's joy bubbling down;
Men did not laugh in Naseby town,

Or use such speech to stranger maid;
I was half angered, half afraid,
And yet — and yet — Oh Love! I stayed.

After the Battle

How the birds sang—a year ago !
Through drifted May, through drifted snow,
A year of love ! And yet none know,—

None who 'mid cold walls praying kneel,
Who call joy sin, whose iron heel
Stamps love's white flame,—who dare not feel !

Joy, love, are God's ! So Rupert taught
The heart that bloomed for him who sought
Beneath my kerchief's snow. Each thought

And word were sacred, holy, there
Where God's birds thrilled His bloom-sweet air ;
And in each kiss was shut a prayer.

.

After the Battle

He said I taught his soul God's claim,
I taught him prayer, — yet till he came
What was God to me but a name?

His Wrath, His Justice, — these I knew.
Ah! how the May-boughs laced the blue,
And all at once God's Love looked through!

.

So still he lies, — what is this room
With crawling shadows, walls of gloom
That darken — close — as if a tomb

Had shut, — the red stains on the floor
That stare and stare? — One — two — three — four —
Five — from the couch side to the door.

After the Battle

What were the words my mother spake?

“I served his mother, — for her sake

Guard thou his sleep — no King — shall — wake — ”

Rupert ! — belovéd — Rupert — speak !

Feel'st not my hair warm on thy cheek,

My lips that for thy kisses seek?

Dead — dead ! — thou, — Rupert, — thou? No ! — No !

The love that flamed beneath the snow

Crushed out? God could not have it so !

Not Him we prayed to in the wood,

'Till our hearts knew He understood, —

Thy God so tender and so good

After the Battle

That for a sparrow's fall doth grieve,—
This kiss thou taught'st me how to give,
This life thou taught'st me how to live,

He knew—He gave—He could not blot!
Ah—on my kerchief's snow a spot!
Blood—blood—thy blood! Oh God forgot!

.
The throng's dull clamour creeps this way;
Men,—yea, and women,—bless this day;—
God, I kneel here—and cannot pray.

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